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THE ABSOLUTE RELIGION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE THIRD PART OF HEGEL'S "PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION," BY F. LOUIS
SOLDAN.

We shall proceed in the following to discuss the realized idea of religion, or perfect religion, in which the idea has become its own object [of contemplation]. Religion has been defined as self-consciousness of God; self-consciousness, as consciousness, has an object, and is conscious of itself in the same; this object is also consciousness, but consciousness as an object, and for this reason, finite consciousness, a consciousness distinct from God, from the absolute; this implies limitation, and therefore finitude. God is self-consciousness, he knows himself in a consciousness distinct from himself, which is, in itself, the consciousness of God; but it is this also for itself, since it knows its identity with God, which identity, however, is mediated by the negation of finiteness. This idea constitutes the content of religion: that it is the nature of God that he can distinguish himself from himself and be his own object, and yet remain in this distinction strictly identical with himself. He is spirit. This idea is now realized; consciousness knows this content, and it knows itself to be intertwined with it. In the idea which is the process of God, it itself is one of the elements and phases. Finite consciousness knows God only in so far as God knows himself in it; hence, God is spirit, and, more particularly, the spirit of his church, that is, of those who revere him. This is perfect religion—the idea that has become objective to itself. In this it is manifest what God is. He is no longer a something beyond, something unknown, for he has made known to man what he is, not merely in an external historical way, but in his consciousness. We have, therefore, here the religion of the manifestation of God, since God knows himself in the finite spirit. God is simply manifest. This is the relation here. The transition was, as we have seen, that this cognition of God as free spirit was, according to its content, still burdened with finitude and immediateness. This finite element has to be cancelled by the work of spirit; it is nugatory. We have seen how its nugatory character has become manifest to consciousness. Misery and wretchedness, the pain of

existence, were the condition, the preparation of the subjective side for the consciousness of free spirit, as an absolutely free and thereby infinite spirit.

(A) We shall first dwell on the general aspect of this sphere.

1. Absolute religion is manifest religion. Religion is obvious, manifest only after the idea of religion exists for itself; or, religion, its concept, has become an object to itself, not in limited finite objectivity, but in being an object to itself according to its idea. This may be more adequately expressed thus: Religion, according to the general idea, is consciousness of the absolute essence. Now, consciousness distinguishes, and thus we have two: consciousness and absolute essence. These two are external in their finite relation, namely, empirical consciousness, and essence in another sense.

They stand in finite relationship to each other, and in this respect they are finite to each other, and so consciousness cognizes absolute being as something finite only, and not in its truth. God himself is consciousness, distinction of himself in himself, and, as consciousness, he gives himself as object for what we call the side of consciousness.

Thus we have always two things in consciousness, which are finite, and external to each other. If religion seizes and comprehends itself, then the content and the object of religion are themselves this totality, which is consciousness related to its own essence, the cognition of itself as essence, and the cognition of essence as itself; that is to say, spirit is thus the object of religion. We have in this way, two: consciousness and its object; but in religion, which is filled with itself, which is revealed, which has grasped itself and comprehends itself—religion itself and its content is the object; this object is the self-cognizing being, is the spirit. In this alone, spirit becomes the object and content of religion, and spirit exists for spirit only. In thus being content and object, spirit is self-cognition, self-distinction, and places before itself the other side of subjective consciousness, which appears finite. This is religion filled with itself. This is the abstract determination of this absolute idea, or religion is, indeed, the idea. For the absolute idea, in the philosophical sense, is the idea which has itself for an object, or, in other words, which has determinate existence, reality, objectivity, which is no longer merely internal or subjective, but has made itself objective, and whose objectivity is at the same time a return

into itself; that is to say, in as far as we call the idea the end and aim, it is the realized completed end and aim, which is likewise objective.

Religion has for its object its own existence, namely, the consciousness of its own essence; it is therein objectified; it *is* now in reality what it was in the first place as mere idea, when it was nothing but an idea, or when it was only our idea. Absolute religion is the manifest one, it is the religion which has itself for its content and for its subject-matter. This is the perfect religion, the one which is the being of spirit or mind for itself, the religion which has become objective in itself—Christian religion. It contains inseparably the universal and the individual spirit, the finite and the infinite; their absolute identity forms this religion and its content. This universal power is the substance, which, since it is just as much subject in-itself, now posits this being-in-itself, and thus creates a distinction from itself, and makes itself known to cognition or to the finite spirit; yet, since this is but a phase (moment) of universal spirit itself, the latter remains in itself, and in this separation or distinction returns to itself inseparable and entire.

Theology has, commonly speaking, for its aim the cognition of God as an object, which remains strictly in separation from subjective consciousness, and as such is an external object like the sun, sky, etc., an object of consciousness; in all these the object has the invariable characteristic of being something else, something external [a mere relative]. The idea of absolute religion, on the contrary, may be said to lie, not in the consideration of these external elements, but in that of religion itself; that is to say, the unity of this representation which we call God, with the subject.

We may look upon this as being the standpoint of our present time, namely, that religion, religious life, piety, are the chief things after all, and that the object does not matter so much. Men have different religions, the principal thing is, that they are pious; our time thinks that God cannot be known or cognized as an object, and that, after all, our subjective manner and attitude are the only things of importance. This is the standpoint which may be traced in what has been said before. It is the standpoint of our own days, but at the same time an important progress, that has established the validity of its infinite element, namely, the consciousness of the subject as an invariable phase. There is the

same content on both sides, and this "being in itself" (potentiality) of the two sides is religion. It is the great attainment of our time that subjectivity has been cognized as the absolute element; this determination is essential. The main point, however, is *how* it is determined.

The following may be said of this great progress: Religion in the determination of consciousness is so constituted that the content flees beyond, and thus seemingly remains estranged. Whatever content religion may have, if this content is seized from the standpoint of consciousness, it remains something that is beyond; and even when the determination of revelation is added to its content, it is nevertheless something external, something given. The view set forth above, namely, that the divine content is given or simply posited, and therefore cannot be cognized, but should rather be embraced passively by faith, will, on the other hand, also lead to the subjectivity of feeling, which is the end and result of divine worship. The standpoint of consciousness is therefore not the only one. The worshipper gives his whole heart, his devotion, his will to his object, and loses himself in it; in the depth of this devotion he has cancelled the separation which exists in the standpoint of consciousness. The standpoint of consciousness arrives at subjectivity as well, which is non-estrangement, which is the sinking of spirit into a depth which is not remote but near and present.

This annulment of separation may, however, be conceived as something alien, as the grace and mercy of God, as something alien, to which man must submit, and in relation to which he occupies a passive attitude. Such separation is controverted by the limitation that religion is the principal thing, or, in other words, that the main point is the subjective which holds in itself that which God wills. In the subject there is still the inseparate state of subjectivity and the other, the objectivity. In other words, the subject is necessary throughout the whole extent as the real relation. This standpoint, therefore, raises the subject to an essential determination, and is connected with the freedom of spirit, which it has restored. There is no standpoint in which spirit is not in itself. The concept of absolute religion holds for its content that religion is objective to itself. But only the idea holds this content. The idea is one thing, the consciousness another.

Thus in absolute religion the idea may have this content in it-

self, but consciousness is a different matter. This is the side of which we have become conscious, and which has shown itself in the characterization set forth above, namely, that it is religion which is the principal thing. The idea itself is as yet one-sided, being taken merely as being in itself; it appears in the same one-sided form where subjectivity itself is one-sided; it possesses the determination of one of the two only; it is only infinite form, pure self-consciousness, the pure cognition of itself. In itself it is void of content, because here religion is taken simply in itself; it is religion in the still unreal form, since it has not yet objectified itself nor given itself any content. Non-objectivity is absence of content.

It is the privilege of truth that knowledge should possess in religion its absolute content. Here, however, this content is not the true one, it is truth crippled or dwarfed in its growth. The content, of course, is there, but it is contingent, finite, and empirically limited, and shows a certain resemblance to the age of the Romans. The time of the Roman empire has much resemblance with ours. The subject as it is, as it exists, is conceived as infinite, but, abstractly taken, it changes into its opposite, and is simply finite and limited. Freedom in this sense is only one which allows a world beyond to exist; it is a longing which negates the distinctions of consciousness and in this rejects the important element and principle of spirit, and therefore is naught but spiritless subjectivity.

Religion is the spirit's cognition of itself as spirit; this pure cognition does not know itself as spirit, and is therefore not substantial but subjective cognition. But the fact that this knowledge is simply subjective, and therefore limited knowledge, does not exist for subjectivity in its own shape, that is, as knowledge, but as its immediate being in itself, which subjectivity finds in itself; it finds it in its cognition of itself as of something strictly infinite in its feeling of its finitude, and involved in this the feeling of infinity as its transcendental being-in-itself opposed to its being-for-itself, the feeling of longing for the inexplicable beyond.

Absolute religion, on the contrary, contains the category of subjectivity, or of infinite form as identical with substance. We may give the name of cognition, of pure intelligence, to this subjectivity, this infinite form, this unlimited elasticity of substance

which can dirempt itself and become its own object. The content remains identical with itself because it is the infinitely substantial subjectivity which makes an object and content of itself. In this content the finite subject is again distinguished from the infinite object. God as spirit conceived as remaining beyond, or not as a living spirit in his church, is looked upon in the one-sided limitation of an object.

This is the idea. It is the idea of the absolute idea and of its perfect realization ; spirit is now the reality which exists for spirit, which has itself for its object, and therefore this religion is the manifest religion ; God reveals himself. To reveal means this judgment of infinite form which can determine itself, which can be for another ; this self-manifestation belongs to the essence of spirit itself. A spirit that does not manifest itself is not spirit. In saying God has created the world, the same is expressed as an act completed and finished, as something which could be or could not be ; God might have revealed himself or not ; it is, so to say, an arbitrary predication which does not belong to the idea of God. But God as a spirit is essentially this self-revelation ; he creates the world not once, but is eternally creating ; he is an eternal self-revelation, and an everlasting actus. This is his idea, his definition.

Manifest religion, which manifests spirit to spirit, is as such the religion of spirit, which does not close itself against another ; and this other is therefore but temporarily another. God posits the other and removes the difference in his eternal movement. It is the essence of spirit to be its own phenomenon ; this is its deed and its life ; this is its only deed and it itself is but its deed. What is it that reveals God, if it is not that he is this self-revelation ? What he reveals is the infinite form. Absolute subjectivity is the activity of determination ; this is the positing of distinctions, the positing of content ; what he reveals in this way is, that he is the power to create these differences in himself. His being is, to make these distinctions eternal, to take them back, and in all these to be in himself. What is revealed is that he is for another. These are the characteristics of revelation.

2. This religion which is manifest to itself is not only the manifest religion, but also the one which is called revealed religion ; by this is meant, on one side, that it is revealed by God, that God has made himself known to man, and, on the other side, that

it is revealed religion, and positive in the sense that it was bestowed upon man, given to him by a power outside of himself.

On account of this peculiarity connected in our mental view with the idea of the positive, it will be interesting to us to know what the positive really is.

Absolute religion is indeed positive, in the sense in which everything that exists for consciousness is something objective for the latter. All things must come to us in an external way; in this sense the sensuous is positive; for there is nothing so positive as what presents itself immediately to our senses.

Everything spiritual comes to us in the same way, as finite or historical spirituality; this mode of external spirituality, and of all self-expressing spirituality, is just as positive. A higher and purer spirituality is that in the ethical element, in the laws of liberty. But according to its nature this is no such external spiritual principle, not an externality, a contingency, but it is of the nature of pure spirituality itself; it comes to us, however, externally, in the first place as instruction, education, doctrine. In these it is given to us, and we are shown that it is valid. The civil laws and those of the state are also positive; they extend over us, they are for us, they are valid; they have existence; not such existence simply that we can let them alone, that we can ignore them, but rather in such a way that in this externality they are for us subjectively something essential, something which binds us subjectively.

When we comprehend, cognize, the law, that crime should be punished, and find it rational, it is essential for us not only in the sense that it is valid for us *because* it is positive, or because it exists, but it has also internal validity in our reason as something essential, since it is internal, rational.

The fact that it is positive does not deprive it in any way of the characteristic that it is rational and our own. The laws of freedom have always a positive side, a side of reality, externality, contingency, in their manifestation. It is necessary to determine laws; in the determining of the quality of penalty, and, still more, in that of the quantity, we have already this external element.

The positive element cannot be omitted in penal laws; it is quite necessary; this last determination of the immediate is something positive, something that is not rational. In pronouncing penalties, for instance, a round number is usually taken; no reasoning

can tell what measure is absolutely just. Whatever is positive according to its nature, is irrational: it needs determination in a way that has nothing rational in it.

This side also is necessary in manifest religion: since there is in it the historical, the externally manifest element, there is also necessarily the positive and contingent element in it, which may exist in this form or any other. So we see that this contingent element is found also in religion. By virtue of the external, of the phenomenon which is posited with it, the positive always exists.

But we may distinguish the positive as such, the abstractly positive, and the positive in the form and as the law of freedom. The law of freedom is valid not because it exists, but because it is the characteristic of our own rationality; it is no longer something positive simply, something that happens to prevail, when it has become known as this characteristic. Religion, too, appears positive in the whole content of its teaching, but it must not remain thus a mere matter of memory, a mere conceptive image in the mind.

In regard to the verification of religion, the positive element has the signification that the external must bear testimony of the truth of a religion, and is to be looked upon as the ground of the truth of a religion. In some instances this verification has the form of the positive as such. There are miracles and evidences which are to prove that the character of the individual giving these revelation is divine, and that he has taught this or that doctrine.

Miracles are changes in the natural order of the sensuous world, which are perceived, and thus perception itself is sensuous, because it concerns sensuous changes. In regard to these perceptive elements, these miracles, it has been said that they furnish a verification for sensuous man, but it is only the beginning of a verification, an unspiritual verification by which the spiritual cannot be verified.

The spiritual as such cannot be directly verified by the unspiritual or the sensuous. The main thing of this side of the miracles is, that they are set aside in this way. Reason may attempt to explain miracles in the natural way, and may say much that is probable against them, that is, it may dwell on the external, on the occurrence as such, and reason against them. The main point of view of the reason in regard to miracles is that the spiritual cannot be verified externally. For the spiritual ranks higher than the

external and can be verified only by itself and in itself ; it can prove itself only in itself and by itself. This is what may be called the evidences of spirit. This is expressed in the history of religion itself : Moses performs miracles before Pharaoh ; the Egyptians did the same with their enchantments ; this certainly means that no great value is attached to it. The most important thing, however, is that Christ himself says : " There are many that will say that they have done many wonderful works in my name, and then will I profess unto them that I never knew them." Here he himself rejects miracles as a true criterion of truth. This is the principal consideration and we must hold to it ; the verification through miracles is a sphere that does not concern us ; the evidence of spirit is the true evidence. This evidence may be manifold. It may be indefinite, general, as something that satisfies the spirit, and, by appealing to it, calls forth its silent approval and is in harmony with it. Thus in history the noble, sublime, moral, and divine, appeal to us ; for these, our spirit bears evidence. This may remain a kind of general harmony, an approbation given by our inner nature, our sympathy. But it may also become connected with our insight and our thinking ; this insight, in so far as it is nothing sensuous, belongs directly to thinking ; no matter what it is, whether it has the form of reasoning, distinctions, etc., it is activity according to our own determinations of thinking, that is, according to the categories. It may be more or less elaborate, it may form the principal presupposition of his heart and his spirit in general—presuppositions of general maxims which are valid for him and accompany him through life. It is not necessary that these maxims be conscious ones, they may be the mode and manner in which his character is formed, they may be the universal which has gained firm footing in his spirit ; this then has become something fixed, something firmly established in his mind ; it will then rule him.

On such a firm basis and presupposition, his reasoning and determining process may begin. There are many degrees of culture, many walks of life, and there are various needs. But the highest need of the human mind is thinking (which is the evidence of spirit), in such a way that it does not exist merely in the harmonious response of a first sympathy, nor in the other manner in which there are certain firm bases and principles in the mind on which

conclusions and inferences may be built. The evidence of spirit in its highest form is philosophy, in which the conception purely as such develops the truth from itself; and, developing, we cognize and see the necessity of this development in and through itself.

Faith has often been contrasted with thinking in the saying, that there is no conviction about God and religion possible in any other way, except by thinking; thus the proofs of the existence of God have been sometimes considered the only way of knowing the truth and of arriving at conviction.

But this testimony of spirit may exist in various, different ways. We must not demand that truth shall be apprehended by all men in the philosophical way. The needs of individuals differ according to their education and free development, and, according to these various stages of development, we find the demand of and the confidence in the belief in authority.

Miracles also find their place here, and it is interesting to see that they are limited to this minimum. There is therefore the positive element also in this form of the testimony of spirit. Sympathy, this immediate certitude, is on account of this immediateness something positive, and ratiocination, which starts from something posited or given, has the same basis. Man alone has religion, and religion has its ground and seat in thinking activity. Heart and feeling are not the heart and feeling of the animal, but the heart of thinking man, thinking heart and feeling; and whatever religion exists in this heart and feeling, exists in the thinking activity of this heart and feeling. Whenever we begin to infer, to reason, to state the cause, we do this by thinking.

In so far as the doctrines of Christian religion are contained in the Bible, they are given in a positive manner, and when they become subjective, when spirit gives its testimony for them, this may be done quite in the immediate way, so that it strikes the innermost nature of man, his spirit, his thinking, his reason, and they are harmonious with him. Thus the Bible is for the Christian the basis, the main basis, which has this effect upon him, which harmonizes with his soul, and gives this firmness to his convictions.

But it follows that, because he thinks, he can not stop at these immediate testimonies and admissions, but must proceed to thoughts, contemplations, reflections, on this subject. This then leads to the further development of religion, and in the higher,

most perfect form, it is theology, or scientific religion, when this content is known, in a scientific way, as the testimony of spirit.

Then the antithesis is presented in the assertion that the Bible is in itself enough for this purpose, and that we ought not to go beyond it. This is in one respect a perfectly correct principle. There are men that are very religious and do nothing else but read the Bible and recite its verses, who possess a high degree of piety and of religiousness; but they are not theologians, for there is no science, no theology, in them. Goetze, the Lutheran zealot, had a famous collection of Bibles. The devil may quote Scripture, but this alone does not constitute the theologian.

As soon as there is more than the mere reading or repetition of the verses, as soon as so-called explanations begin or the reasoning and exegesis in regard to the meaning, man has begun the process of ratiocination, reflection, and thinking, and then the principal point is, whether his thinking is correct or not, and how the thinking is carried on.

It is of no use to say that these inferences or assertions are based upon the Bible. As soon as they are no longer the words of the Bible, a logical form is given to this content; the content receives its logical form, or, there are certain presuppositions made in this content, and with these we proceed to the explanation; they are the permanent element in the explanation; we bring with us mental views which direct our expositions. The expositions of the Bible show the content of the Bible in the form and mode of the thinking of the time when they are made; the first exposition was quite different from the present one.

Such presuppositions are, for instance, that man is good by nature, that God cannot be cognized. What a distorted idea of the Bible must he have, who harbors such a prejudice in his head! Man carries these prejudices with him to his task, although it is very essential to the Christian religion to cognize God, and in it God has even revealed himself and shown that he is.

The positive may enter here, however, in another way. It is therefore important to know whether this content, these notions and assertions, are true.

For this is no longer the Bible, but words, which the spirit conceives internally. If the spirit utters them, they assume a form which the spirit has given to them, a form of thinking. The form

given to this content is to be examined. There the positive element enters again. Here it has the meaning that the formal logic of the syllogism, for instance, the thought-relations of the finite, are presupposed.

Then, according to the nature of the syllogism, the finite alone and only what belongs to the nature of the understanding, can be grasped; it is not adequate to the divine content. The content is thus radically spoiled.

Wherever theology is not merely the quoting of the Bible, but goes beyond the mere words, wherever it addresses itself to the feelings and the heart, it uses forms of thinking, it enters into the province of thinking. If theology uses these forms by chance, accidentally, as it were, in as much as it has presuppositions, prejudices, the process is something contingent and arbitrary, and the investigation of these forms of thought belongs to philosophy alone. Theology turning against philosophy is either unconscious that it uses these forms, that it thinks, and that it is important to proceed according to the laws of thinking, or this effort is not meant in earnest, but is a deceit. In that case it wishes to reserve for itself this arbitrary, contingent thinking, which is here the positive element.

The cognition of the true nature of thinking will disparage mere arbitrary thinking. This contingent, arbitrary thinking is the positive element which enters here. Only the idea for itself frees itself truly from this positive element; for in philosophy and in religion is found this higher freedom which thinking as such is in itself.

The doctrine, the content likewise, receives the form of the positive, it is validity, it is valid in human society. All law, all that is valid, has this form, namely, that it is being and as such it is for everybody the essential, the valid. But this is only the form of the positive; its content must be the true spirit.

The Bible has this form of the positive; one of its verses says: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;" here it makes some difference what spirit we carry in us during the reading, and what spirit animates the words. It is necessary to know that we bring with us the concrete spirit, the thinking, reflecting, or feeling spirit, and we must be conscious of this spirit, which is active and grasps this content.

Grasping or comprehending is not a passive act of reception: on the contrary, when the spirit comprehends, this comprehension is at the same time its activity; in the mechanical alone one side is passive in receiving. The spirit comes in contact with the object to be grasped; this spirit has its apperceptions, its concepts: it is a logical being, it is thought-activity, and this activity the spirit must know. Thinking may proceed in this or that category of finitude.

It is the spirit which begins in this way with the positive, but the essential point is, that it be the true, right, and holy spirit which comprehends and knows this content and the divine as divine. This is the testimony of spirit which may be more or less developed.

The main point in regard to the positive is therefore that the spirit is thinking, that it is an activity in the categories and determinations of thinking, and that the spirit is active in all this, whether it feels or reasons, etc. Some people do not know this, and are not aware that in receiving they are active.

Many theologians, in their exegetic activity, while they believe that they are purely receptive, do not realize that they are active in this, inasmuch as they reflect. If this thinking is thus contingent in its proceeding, it surrenders itself to the categories of finitude, and with this it is rendered incapable of comprehending the divine element in the content; it is not the divine but the finite spirit which proceeds in such categories.

By such finite conceptions of the divine which is in and for itself, by this finite thinking of the absolute content, it has happened that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity have, as far as the greater part is concerned, disappeared from dogmatics. While philosophy is not the only science that is orthodox, yet it is at present preëminently so; the principles which have always been valid, the fundamental truths of Christianity, have been preserved and maintained by it.

In considering this religion we do not proceed historically after the manner of the spirit that begins externally, but we begin with the idea. That activity which begins with the external is receptive on one side only; on the other hand, it is activity. Our mode here is essentially such activity, and, moreover, activity accompanied by the consciousness of thinking directed towards such

activity, towards the course of the categories of thinking; of thinking which has examined and cognized itself, which knows what it thinks, and knows which are the true and which the finite categories of thinking. That we begin, however, with the positive, is a part of our education and necessary there; but here we must leave this mode behind us in order to proceed scientifically.

3. Absolute religion, as it appears from these considerations, is the religion of truth and freedom. For truth means that we do not look upon what is objective as upon something strange or alien. Freedom expresses the same as truth with the limitation of negation. The spirit is for the spirit, and *it is* this; it is therefore its own presupposition; we begin with the spirit as subject; it is identical with itself, it is the eternal perception of itself, and it is therefore at the same time comprehended only as a result, as an end. It is self-presupposition, and, in the same manner, the result, and is only as the end. This is the truth, this attribute of being adequate, this power of being object and subject. That the spirit is its own object is the reality, it is the idea, the absolute idea, and this is the truth. In the same way absolute religion is the religion of freedom. Freedom, abstractly, is the relation to something objective, as to something which is not strange or alien; it is the same as truth, the only difference being that freedom has also in it the negation of the difference of estrangement, and this appears in the form of conciliation. The latter begins with this, that there are different existences standing opposed to each other: God who has over against himself an estranged world, a world which has become estranged from its essence. Conciliation is the negation of this separation, this disunion, and consists in the cognition of each other, in finding in the other one's self and one's essence. Thus reconciliation is freedom; it is neither passive, nor in the state of Being simply, but it is activity. Each of these, reconciliation, truth, freedom, is a general process, and can therefore not be expressed, without onesidedness, in a single sentence. The principal concept is that of the unity of the divine and human nature: God has become man. This unity is, in the first place, only in itself [or potential], but in the sense that it is eternally created and actualized; this creation or actualization is liberation and reconciliation, which is possible only by this potentiality ("durch das an sich"). It is the substance which is identical with itself, that

forms, as such, the basis ; but as subjectivity it is that which eternally actualizes and creates itself.

The result of all philosophy is that this idea is the absolute truth ; in its purest form it is logic, but it is just as much the result of the observation of the concrete world. This is truth : that nature, life, and spirit are organical throughout, and that each separate one is but a mirror reflecting this idea, so that it appears in it as particularized, as a process in it, so that this unity is manifested in the difference.

Natural religion is religion on the standpoint of consciousness merely ; absolute religion contains this standpoint as well, but it is only comprised in it as a transitory element ; in natural religion God is represented as something alien in natural shape, or religion has only the form of consciousness. The second form was that of spiritual religion, of spirit which remains limited finitely ; in this respect it is the religion of self-consciousness of the absolute power, of the necessity which we have seen ; the One, the power is the insufficient element because it is only abstract power, and, according to its content, is not yet absolute subjectivity ; it is only abstract necessity, abstractly-simple being-by-itself [i. e., undeveloped being].¹

The abstraction in which power and necessity are conceived, as yet, on that stage, constitutes finitude ; and the special powers, God's, determined according to spiritual content, constitute the totality by adding to this abstraction the real content. And, lastly, the third religion is that of freedom, of self-consciousness which forms at the same time the consciousness of the comprehensive reality and determinateness of the eternal idea of God himself, and in this objectivity is at one with itself. Freedom is the characteristic of self-consciousness.

THE METAPHYSICAL CONCEPT OF THE IDEA OF GOD.

(B) The metaphysical idea of God means here the pure idea only, which becomes real through itself. The definition of God in this

¹ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—This stage has not yet arrived at the insight that there is identity between the irresistible, external power and the spiritual element in man ; there is, therefore, consciousness of this power above, but not yet the self-consciousness of identity with it.

connection is, that He is the absolute idea, that is to say, that He is spirit. But spirit, the absolute idea, has the meaning that he is the unity of concept and reality, so that the idea is in and by itself as in its totality, and in the same way as the reality. This reality is the revelation, manifestation existent for itself. In so far as this manifestation has in itself the attribute of difference, there will be found in it also the determination of finite spirit, of human nature, which is finite contrasted with that idea; while we thus call the absolute idea the divine nature, the idea of spirit is to be the unity of divine and human nature. But the divine nature is nothing but absolute spirit, hence this unity of divine and human nature is the absolute spirit itself. But the truth cannot be expressed in one proposition or sentence. The two are different, the absolute concept and the idea, as the absolute unity of its reality. Spirit is therefore the living process by which the unity in itself of the divine and human nature becomes for itself and is produced.

The abstract definition of this idea is the unity of idea with reality. In the form of the proof of the existence of God, the proof is formed by this transition, this mediation, that the existence of God follows from the idea. It must be remarked here that in the other proofs we started from finite being which was the immediate, and from which we reasoned towards the infinite, towards true being which appeared in the form of infinity, necessity, absolute power, which is at the same time wisdom having end and aim in itself. Here, however, we start with the idea, and pass over to being. Both are necessary, and this unity must necessarily be shown by starting from one as well as from the other, for the identity of the two is the truth. The idea as well as being, the world, the finite, are one-sided determinations, each of which reverts into the other and exhibits itself first in the phase of being a dependent part, and secondly in the phase of being able to produce the other determination which it carries in itself. In the idea alone they have their truth, i. e., both are posited, neither can have the exclusive function of remaining a beginning, or original element, each must present itself rather as the transition into the other, i. e., each must be something posited. This transition has a contrary signification, each is represented as a stage in this process, i. e., it is the transition from the immediate to the other, so

that each is something posited; on the other hand, it has the signification, that it is something which produces and posits the other. In this way it represents the one side of the movement as well as the other.

If we were to show in the idea the transition into being, we should say first, that the category Being is in itself quite empty and poor; it is abstract self-identity; this last abstraction and affirmation is in its ultimate abstraction entirely indeterminate immediateness. If there were nothing else in the idea, this last abstraction, at least, would still be attributable to it, namely, the idea *is*. Even when determined simply as infinity, or, in a more concrete signification, as unity of the universal and particular, as universality which particularizes itself and thereby returns into itself, we find that this negation of the negative, this relation to itself, this being, is taken quite abstractly. This identity with itself, this category, is at the very outset contained essentially in the idea.

It must be said, however, that the transition from the concept to being is rich and full, and contains the deepest interest of reason. The comprehension of this relation between concept and being is an important interest of our time. It requires to be said, why this transition is of such interest. The appearance of this contrast is an indication that subjectivity has attained the culmination of its being for itself, and has arrived at the totality of knowing itself as infinite and absolute. The essential determination of manifest religion is the form by which the substance is spirit. One side in the contrast is the subject itself, that is, the realization of the idea in its concrete signification. The reason that this contrast appears so difficult, so infinite, is that this one side of reality, this side of subjectivity, the finite spirit, has attained to the comprehension of its infinity. The subject cannot be Being before it is the totality, before it has attained this freedom; then, however, it will be true also that the subject is indifferent to this Being; and that the subject is for itself, and that being then stands on the other side as an alien, other thing. This is the special reason why the contrast may appear as infinite, and there is therefore at the same time a lively impulse to cancel this contrast. This demand to cancel the contrast lies also in its totality, but this annulment has become infinitely difficult because the contrast is so infinite, and the alien, the other,

is so entirely free. It is being that is beyond, that is on the other side.

The greatness of the standpoint of the modern world is this absorption of the subject in itself, the cognition which the finite has of itself as the infinite, while the contrast still clings to it, which it feels compelled to cancel. For thus the infinite stands over against an infinite, and the infinite posits itself as finite, so that the subject on account of its infinity is compelled to cancel this contrast which has deepened itself to its infinity. The contrast or antithesis is: I am subject, free, I am a person for myself, and therefore I let the other, the alien, go free which is on the other side and remains there. The ancients never arrived at the consciousness of this contrast, nor at this dilemma, which only spirit, that is for itself, can bear. Spirit itself is only this: to comprehend itself as infinite in its opposite. The standpoint, as it presents itself here is, that we have on one side the idea of God, and on the other side we have being, contrasted with this idea; and the demand is then to effect the mediation of both, so that the idea should unfold itself and become being, or that the other, the antithesis, should arise out of being. We must give a brief exposition of the manner and mode in which this is done, and also of the form of reasoning.

The form which this mediation has is the ontological proof of the existence of God, in which the idea is made the starting-point. Now, what is the idea of God? It is that of the most real, it must be grasped affirmatively only, it is determined in itself, its content has no limitation, it is the whole of reality, and only as reality it is without limit, and thus it might be said, there is nothing beyond this but a dead abstraction, as has been remarked before. The possibility of this idea, i. e., its identity free from contradiction, is shown in the form of the understanding. The *second step* is, that it is said that being is a reality, non-being is a negation, and compared with it a privation; the *third* is the conclusion: Being is reality, therefore, which belongs to the idea of God.

What Kant has said against it resulted in the destruction of this proof, and has become the opinion of the world. Kant says that, from the concept of God, his existence cannot be inferred by any sophistry or quibble; for Being, he says, is something different

from concept ; since we distinguish them, and the two are opposites, and therefore the concept cannot contain being : for it stands on the other side. He says further : Being is no reality, all reality is attributed to God, and therefore it is not contained in the concept of God, namely, because being is no determination of contents but pure form. Whether I imagine a hundred dollars, or possess them, the money itself is not changed thereby ; it is the same content whether I have it or not. Kant thus takes the content to constitute the concept or idea, that being does not belong to what is contained in the concept. One may indeed say this, provided one understands by concept the determination of content, and distinguishes content and form, which comprises the thought, and these, on the other hand, from being. All content is therefore on the side of concept, and on the other side remains nothing but the determination of being. Briefly expressed, this is as follows : The idea or concept is not being ; they differ. We can cognize nothing of God ; we can know nothing ; we may form concepts of him, but this does not show that our concept is correct.

We know well enough, indeed, that anybody can build castles in the air, which have no existence. It is an appeal to popular prejudice, and in this way Kant has produced a negative result in the common judgment, and has gained the multitude over to himself.

Anselm of Canterbury, a thoroughly learned theologian, has presented this proof in the following way : God is the most perfect being, the essence of all reality ; now, if God is a mere concept of imagination, a subjective concept or idea, He is not the most perfect being, for that only we consider perfect which is not merely an imagined concept, but has at least being. This is quite correct, and a presupposition which everybody has in himself, namely, that what is merely an image of conception is imperfect ; that only is perfect which has also reality, that only is true which *is* in the same way in which it is thought. Now, God is the most perfect, therefore He must be in reality and being just as He is in concept. Even in our own image-concepts we find the truth that image-concepts and ideas are different ; and we find there further that whatever is only an image-concept is imperfect, and also that God is the most perfect being. Kant does not prove the difference between concept and being, he simply assumes it in a popu-

lar way, and it is allowed to stand—but it is only of imperfect things that common-sense has any image-concept.

Anselm's proof, as well as the form it has received in the ontological proof, contains the idea that God is the embodiment of all reality, and therefore he contains also being. This is quite correct. Being is such a poor and empty determination that it is predicable of the concept immediately. The other is, that being and idea or concept are also distinct from each other; being and thinking, ideality and reality, are distinct and opposite, and this contrast is to be cancelled, and the unity of both determinations is to be so exhibited that they become the result of the negation of the contrast or antithesis. Being is contained in the idea. This reality, unlimited, yields empty words, empty abstractions only. It must therefore be shown that the determination of being is contained affirmatively in the idea, and this would be the unit of idea and being.

But they are different at the same time, and so their unity is the negative unity of both, and the important step is the cancellation of the difference. The difference must be discussed, and the unity restored after this difference, and exhibited. It is the office of logic to show this. The logical sequel, namely, that the idea or concept is just this movement which determines itself as being, that it is the dialectic, the movement to determine itself into being, into the opposite of itself, all this is a further development which is not given in the ontological proof, and this is its defect.

As regards the form of the thought of Anselm, it has been remarked that the meaning of the content is, that the idea presupposes reality, because God is the most perfect being. Here it is necessary that the idea should objectify itself for itself.

God is thus the most perfect thing, as posited merely in mental representation or image conception; but, measured with the most perfect, the mere concept of God appears deficient. There the concept is the scale of measurement, and then God, as a mere concept, as a mere thought, is inadequate to this scale of measurement.

Perfection is but an indefinite mental representation, or image-concept. And yet, what is perfect? The determination of perfection we see immediately only in that which is opposite to what it

is here applied ; namely, it is the thought only of God, and therefore the perfect is the unity of thought, or concept, with the reality, and this unity is therefore here presupposed. When thus God is posited as the most perfect, He has here no further determination ; He is only as such, and this is his determination. It appears from this that the question turns simply on this unity of concept and of reality. This reality is the determination of perfection, and at the same time that of the deity itself, and this is really also the determination of the idea. More, however, is required for the determination of God.

In the Anselmian expression of the idea, the presupposition is in fact the unity of idea and reality ; and, on account of this circumstance, this proof does not give satisfaction to reason, because the supposition is just the point in question. The thought that the idea limits itself, in itself, and that it objectifies itself, is a later insight which results from the nature of the idea, and could not be there at first. This is the insight into the way in which the idea itself cancels its one-sidedness.

If we compare this with the opinion of our age, which bases itself upon Kant's view, we find this : man thinks, perceives, wills, and his volition exists side by side with the thinking ; he thinks and also conceives, he is a sensuous-concrete, and at the same time rational being. The concept of God, the idea, the infinite, the unlimited, is according to this view a concept only which we form for ourselves, but we must not forget that it is nothing but a concept which is in our head. Why do we say, it is only a concept ? The concept is something imperfect, since thinking is but one quality, one activity among many others in man ; e. g., we measure this concept by the scale of reality, which we have before us in concrete man. Man, of course, is not only a thinking being, he is also sensuous, and may have sensuous objects even in his thinking. This, indeed, is only the subjective side of the concept, we find it imperfect on account of the scale by which we measure it, because the latter is concrete man. It may be said that the concept is taken to be nothing but a concept, the sensuous to be reality, that what is seen and felt is reality. This may be said, and many hold this view who recognize nothing as reality but what they feel and taste ; but let us hope that it is not quite so bad that there are people who ascribe reality to the sensuous, but not to the spiritual.

It is the concrete, total subjectivity of man which is before the mind as the scale of measurement, and, measured by it, conceiving is nothing but conceiving.

If we compare them with each other, the thought of Anselm and the thought of modern times, we find that both make presuppositions—Anselm that of infinite perfection, the modern view that of concrete subjectivity of man in general. The idea, when compared with this perfection, or, on the other side, with this empirical presupposition, appears something one-sided and unsatisfactory. In the thought of Anselm the attribute of perfection has, however, the meaning that it is the unity of idea and reality. In the doctrines of Descartes and Spinoza, God is likewise the first principle, the absolute unity of thinking and being—*cogito, ergo sum*, the absolute substance. The same is true of the doctrine of Leibnitz.

What we have on one side is a presupposition—which, in fact, the concrete is—namely, the unity of subject and object; and, measured by this, the idea appears deficient. The modern view says: Here we must stop and insist that the idea is the idea only and does not correspond to the concrete.

Anselm, however, says: We must not maintain that the subjective idea is fixed and independent. We must, on the contrary, correct its one-sidedness. Both views have in common that they have presuppositions. The difference lies in this, that the modern world takes the concrete for its basis, while Anselm's view, which is the metaphysical one, builds on the absolute thought, on the absolute idea, which is unity of idea and reality. This old view is the higher one, inasmuch as it does not take the concrete in the sense of empirical man, in the sense of empirical reality, but as a thought. It ranks higher also in this, that it does not cling to what is imperfect. In the modern view the contradiction between the concrete and what is only an idea is not cancelled; the subjective idea is valid, must be retained as subjective—it is the real. The older side has here decidedly the advantage, because it lays the principal stress on the idea. The modern view, in one respect, is further advanced than it—positing the concrete as the unity of idea and reality, while the older view stops with the abstract idea of perfection.

C. DIVISION.

The absolute, eternal idea is—

1. God, in and for himself, in his eternity, before the creation of the world, outside of the world.

2. Creation of the world. This created and alien being dirempts itself in itself into the two sides of physical nature and finite spirit. What has thus been created is the other, the alien, something that is posited in the first place as external to God. But, it is essential to God that He conciliates with himself this alien and this particular that has been posited as separated from him, and, when the idea has dirempted itself and has fallen away from him, leads it back to his truth.

3. This is the way and the process of conciliation by which the spirit has united with himself what it had separated from itself in its diremption and in its self-antithesis, and by which it is the holy spirit and spirit in its church.

These are, therefore, not distinctions in an external manner which we make, but the activity, the developed life of the absolute spirit itself. This is its eternal life, the development and return of this development into itself.

The further explication of this idea is that it is universal spirit, and that it posits the totality of all it is; that it posits itself, develops, realizes itself in its three determinations, and, only in the end, becomes completely what was at the same time its presupposition. It is at the beginning as a totality, it presupposes itself, and is the same also at the end. Spirit must be considered, therefore, in the three forms or elements in which it posits itself.

These three forms, as has been said, are: (*a*) eternal being in and for itself, or the form of universality; (*b*) the form of the phenomenon, or that of particularization or being for others; (*c*) the form of the return out of the phenomenon into itself, or of absolute singularity.

In these three forms the divine idea unfolds itself. Spirit is the divine history, the process of self-distinction, of diremption, of self-return—it is the divine history and must be considered in each of the three forms.

In regard to subjective consciousness, the three forms may be defined as follows: The first form has the element of thought—

God, in pure thought, is as he is in and for himself, as he is manifest, but has not yet become phenomenon ; God, in his eternal essence, in himself, but manifest. The second form is that he is in the element of mental representation or image-concept ; in the element of particularization, where consciousness is involved in the relation to others, to the alien—this is the phenomenon. The third element is that of subjectivity as such. This subjectivity is partly immediate as sensibility, mental representation or image-concept, emotion, partly as subjectivity, as idea, as thinking reason, as the thinking of the free spirit, which is free only by its return into itself.

In regard to place or space, the three forms are to be explained as development and history, which, as it were, proceed in different places. Thus the first divine history is outside of the world, and, spaceless, outside of finitude—God as he is in and for himself. The second is the divine history as real in the world—God in perfect existence. The third is the internal place, the church which is in the world, but at the same time lifting itself to heaven, and, as a church, having already in itself heaven, that is full of mercy, active in the world, and present.

It is possible to determine these three elements distinctively in regard to time also. In the first element God is outside of time ; he is eternal idea in the element of eternity, in eternity as it is contrasted with time. Thus, time existing in and for itself, unfolds itself, and spreads out as past, present, and future. Divine history, secondly, is as phenomenon, as history. It is as existence, but as existence descended into phenomenality. As phenomenon it is immediate existence which at the same time is negated, and this is the past. The divine history is thus as the past, as history in the proper sense. The third element is the present, which is limited present only, not the eternal present, but the one which distinguishes the past and future from itself ; it is the element of sensibility, the spiritual *now* of the immediate subjectivity. But the present must also be the third: the church lifts itself to heaven. Thus it is a present which elevates and essentially conciliates itself, which is completed to universality by the negation of its immediateness, a perfection which, however, does not yet exist, and is therefore to be conceived as future. A *Now* of the present, which has perfection before itself ; but this per-

fection is distinguished from this now (which is immediateness), since it is posited as future.

We have to consider, in general, the idea of God as divine self-revelation, and this revelation must be taken in the three determinations that have been mentioned.

According to the first, God is for the finite spirit purely as thinking. This is the theoretical consciousness in which the thinking subject is quiet and passive and is not yet posited in this relation, in this process, but lies in the entirely unmoved repose of the thinking spirit. There God is thought for and by the subject and through the self-distinction which remains in the pure ideality and does not attain phenomenal existence, he manifests himself, and is immediately in himself. This is the first relation, which is for the thinking subject only, which is filled by the pure content alone. This is the realm of the Father.

The second determination is the realm of the Son, in which God is for the image-concept or mental representation, as an element of representation—which is the stage of the particular in general. In this second standpoint, that which was other than God and alien, without having this determination, receives the determination of being other and alien. In the first standpoint, God as the Son is not distinguished from the Father, and is expressed only in the mode of emotion. In the second element the Son receives the determination as the other or alien, and we thus step out of pure ideality and thinking into image-concept or mental representation. If, according to the first determination, God there created only the Son, here he produces nature. Here nature is the other or alien, and the difference thus receives its due. The alien is nature, is the world in general, and the spirit which relates to it is the natural spirit; what we called subject before enters here as the content—man is here involved with the content. If man is here related to nature and is natural himself, he is so only within religion: this is, therefore, the religious view of nature and man. The Son enters the world, and this is the beginning of faith. We speak already in the sense of faith when we speak of the entering of the Son. God can not properly exist for finite spirit, as such, since, in so far as he is for it, it is implied immediately that the finite spirit does not grasp its finitude as being, but that it stands in a relation to spirit and conciliates itself with God. As finite spirit it is posit-

ed as departure, as separation from God ; and thus it is a contradiction to its object and content, and this contradiction forms the necessity of its annulment. This necessity is the beginning ; the consequence is that God must assume being for spirit, and that the divine content presents itself to the latter ; and, since this spirit exists empirically and finitely, God's existence will become apparent to him in an empirical manner. But, since in history the divine element becomes evident to spirit, it loses the character of being merely external history and becomes divine history, the manifestation of God himself. This forms the transition of the realm of the spirit, and contains the consciousness that man in himself is conciliated with God, and that conciliation *is* for man. The process of conciliation itself is contained in the form of worship.

It should be observed that we do not distinguish here, as we did in previous places, between idea, shape, and form of worship, for we shall see in this treatise how the form of worship has everywhere immediate influence. We may make the following general observations : The element in which we are is the spirit ; the meaning of spirit is that it manifests itself, that it is absolutely for itself, and, as it is conceived, it is never alone, but always with self-manifestation for another, for *its* other, e. g., for the side which is finite spirit. A form of worship is the relation of finite spirit to the absolute, and therefore we have a form of worship in each of these elements.

We must distinguish in this how the idea in the several elements is for the idea, and how it appears in mental representation and image-conception. Religion is universal, not only for the perfect and conceiving thought, for philosophical consciousness, but the truth of the idea of God is manifest also for the representative consciousness, and has the necessary determinations which are inseparable from mental representation or image-concepts.